

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Special Meeting on Communist China

December 1, 1958

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the best judgments that can be made about the authenticity of Peking's claims about its communalization program? Should the claims be regarded as a realistic indication of accomplishments to date, as a definition of goals which will take some years to achieve, or as propaganda statements of dubious credibility?
2. What are the possible reasons, economic and political, and domestic and external, which may help to explain Peking's decision to embark upon the communalization program? Was the decision related to Communist China's domestic ideological and political problems, its crop situation, its experience with agricultural producer cooperatives, its industrialization aims, its growing balance of payments problems? Was it linked to the over-all international situation affecting Peking, the harder line adopted by the Sino-Soviet bloc in 1958, the Quemoy crisis?
3. What factors help to explain the Chinese Communists' ability to undertake such a radical innovation? Do the Chinese Communists have special or unique qualifications for mass mobilization and manipulation of people, due to the character of Chinese society, the history of the Chinese Communist Party, and the techniques of political and psychological control developed by Peking?
4. What are Peking's major aims and the possible long-term significance of communalization in China? What effects is the program likely to have in economic terms? How will it affect the regime's ability to mobilize and utilize manpower and resources, to rationalize and improve agricultural output, to develop decentralized small-scale industrialization, to maximize capital investment, to regulate population growth, to increase national self-sufficiency? What effects is it likely to have on the regime's political and social control of the country.
5. How are the military potential and position of Communist China likely to be affected by communalization?

- 2 -

6. What major problems is the communalization program likely to encounter? Is it likely that difficulties of administration and organization, possible adverse effects upon the attitude of members of the Communist Party or army, and differences on policy among the top Party leaders will create serious political problems? Is it possible that the program will create serious economic problems, as a result of possible adverse effects on peasants' incentives or because of the inefficiency of decentralized small-scale industry?
7. Can any judgment be made on whether or not the Chinese peasants (and urbanites, if communalization is in fact extended to the cities) can be expected to accept communalization passively? Is communalization compatible with Chinese society? In the short run? In the long run?
8. If the Chinese Communists in time encounter basic difficulties or strong opposition to communalization, will they be able to retreat? Or is the program an all-or-nothing gamble in which the Peking regime will pass a point of no return and will stand or fall on the success or failure of the program?
9. How will communalization in China affect Peking's political and ideological position within the Communist bloc? Its influence on other Asian countries and Communist parties?